

## When does support end?

Unless the order says differently, support continues until a child turns 18 or completes high school — whichever is later. If the order also covers a younger child, you must petition the court to modify the order and change the amount of support.

## What if circumstances change?

Once a support order is issued, it stays in effect until the court changes (*modifies*) it. Either parent can petition the court to modify the order when there:

- Is a real, substantial and unanticipated change in circumstances (e.g., job loss, significant income change, disability, or change in custody);
- Has been a change that will result in child support that's at least 10% higher or lower than ordered;
- Is a need to suspend wage withholding; or
- Is a court review of their support order, which either parent may request once every three years.

*Generally, the court will modify an order back to the date the paperwork was filed, not when the change occurred.*

## Visitation & Child Support

Support and visitation are separate issues.

- **Parent receiving support:** you cannot refuse to honor visitation because support is not paid.
- **Parent paying support:** you cannot refuse to pay support because visitation is not honored.

If you need help with visitation issues, consult your attorney or Family Court.

## Do I need to apply to OCS?

If you want services beyond the collection and distribution of support payments, you must apply to OCS.

**Exception:** if the parent receiving support is getting *Reach Up* benefits, he or she does not have to apply.

You can get an application from the family court clerk or OCS.

## Where can I get more information?

For more detailed information about child support in Vermont, call OCS and ask for a copy of *Child Support in Vermont: A Handbook for Parents*.

You can also get the handbook and application at [www.dcf.vt.gov/ocs](http://www.dcf.vt.gov/ocs).

## OCS Offices

### Northwest Regional Office

(Chittenden, Franklin & Grand Isle counties)  
32 Cherry Street, Suite #310, Burlington, VT 05401 — (802) 863-7444

### Southwest Regional Office

(Addison, Bennington & Rutland counties)  
420 Asa Bloomer State Office Building, Rutland, VT 05701 — (802) 786-5060

### Southeast Regional Office

(Windham & Windsor counties)  
100 Mineral Street, Suite 202, Springfield, VT 05156 — (802) 885-6212

### Northeast Regional Office

(Caledonia, Lamoille & Orleans counties)  
1153 Main Street, St. Johnsbury, VT 05819 — (802) 751-2650

### Central Regional Office

(Essex, Orange & Washington counties)  
162 North Main Street, Suite 205, Barre, VT 05641 — (802) 479-4204

### Customer Service Unit

- 1-800-786-3214
- OCSCSU@ahs.state.vt.us

If English is not your primary language and you need help understanding this information, please let us know.



## Guide for Parents Understanding Your Child Support Order



## Your Child Support Order

Your Child Support Order is a court document that spells out:

- Who must pay support (*obligor*);
- Who receives support (*obligee*);
- The children covered by the order;
- The amount to be paid; and
- When, how often, and how payments must be made.

## The Amount To Be Paid

On page 2 of your order, you'll find:

- The amount of child support to be paid;
- When payments start; and
- How frequently payments must be made (e.g., weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly).



## Arrears To Be Paid

On page 3 of your order, you will find the amount of any arrears owed to:

- The Office of Child Support (OCS);
- Parent receiving support (*obligee*); and
- Another person or agency.

Arrears are payments owed for past-due child support, medical expenses, service fees, penalties, surcharges, and other child support-related expenses.

If you owe arrears, your order will list when these payments begin and how frequently they must be made (e.g., weekly, bi-weekly, monthly).

## Method of Payment

On page 3 or 4 of your order, you will find information about how payments must be made. It will most likely be through wage withholding, since Vermont law requires it in most cases.

Paying support this way:

- Is convenient;
- Helps make sure payments are made on time; and
- Creates an accurate record of the payments made and received.

## Is wage withholding always used?

No. The court may waive wage withholding if, for example:

- Both parents ask the court to let them handle payments on their own; or
- The paying parent has a history of being financially responsible and requests direct payment.

If the court authorizes direct payment, page 4 of your order will tell you where payments must be sent: either to the other parent or to OCS.

## How does wage withholding work?

1. Once employers are notified, they automatically deduct support payments from the paying parents' paychecks — just like other deductions such as taxes; and then
2. They send the payments to OCS for processing and distribution.



## When does withholding start?

It typically takes several weeks for withholding to begin. Until it does, the paying parent must send payments to:  
Vermont Office of Child Support  
PO Box 1310, Williston, VT 05495

On the memo line of the check or money order, please write:

- The name of the parent receiving support (*obligee*); and
- Your Social Security number or the OCS Case ID number if it's available.

## Is OCS always involved?

No. OCS is only involved when:

- The parent receiving support is getting Reach Up benefits;
- A child support order requires wage withholding or direct payment of support to OCS; or
- One or both parents apply to OCS for child support services.

In addition to collecting and distributing support payments, OCS can also help:

- Establish parentage;
- Modify a support order;
- Enforce a support order; and
- Locate a non-custodial parent.